

THE PRINCIPAL WHEAT NO. 1626

**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 25, 1881,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The principal wheat.”
Isaiah 28:25.*

THE whole passage runs on this wise—“Give you ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech. Does the plowman plow all day to sow? Does he open and break the clods of his ground? When he has made plain the face thereof, does he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat, and the appointed barley, and the spelt in its place? For his God does instruct him to discretion, and does teach him. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised because he will never thresh it, or break it with the wheel of his cart, or bruise it with his horsemen. This also comes forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.” The prophet, inspired of God, shows that the farmer is wise and skillful in the management of his farm, in plowing, sowing, threshing, and in all the processes of farming. He asserts that this skill was taught him of his God. I suppose that this is set before us, not as poetry, but as fact. The wisdom of earth is a reflection of the light of heaven. Have you not read—“And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship”?

God is the great teacher of agriculture as well as of handicrafts. If there had not been some information concerning farming conveyed to our first parent when he left the Garden of Eden, he would not have known how to till the soil and produce a harvest—and before he had discovered it, by experience, he would have died of starvation, and the race would have ended with him. The 26th verse says, “His God does instruct him to discretion, and does teach him.” Yes, God has taught men the rudiments of farming, and I conclude, therefore, that if God gives men instruction so that they are able to cultivate the land and produce a harvest of many different kinds of seed, He will much more instruct us if we wait upon Him as to the tillage of our lives, so that we may not sow to the flesh and reap corruption, but may learn how to sow to the Spirit, and may, of the Spirit, reap life everlasting! We are, all of us, farmers. Some of us may be wicked farmers who slay the heir; or slothful farmers who suffer hemlock and darnel to come up where there should be wheat and barley; or fickle farmers who, having put our hand to the plow, have looked back. But we all have fields to till and work to do for the great landlord to whom all things belong. If any of us wish to be true farmers and sow and reap as to be found accepted of our great Lord—and to produce a harvest unto His glory—then we had better go to Him for instruction and ask Him to teach us knowledge and guide us in the way of wisdom. Breathe that prayer to God, now, and may He hear it on behalf of every one of us by sending us His Holy Spirit!

I. There is one point which the prophet mentions as a matter of wisdom on the part of the farmer. It is this—that HE KNOWS WHAT IS THE PRINCIPLE SEED TO CULTIVATE and makes it his principal objective. My text is, “Does not the farmer cast in the principal wheat?” He does not set to work at haphazard without thought, and go to the granary, and take out wheat, cummin, barley, and rye and fling these about right and left! No, he estimates the value of each grain, and arranges them in his mind according to their proportionate values. He does not think that cummin, dill and caraway, which he merely

grows to give a flavor to his dish on the table, are at all of such importance as the wheat. And, though rye and barley have their values, yet he does not reckon that even these are equal to the corn which he calls "the principal wheat." He is a man of discretion. He arranges things, and he places the most important thing in the front rank, and spends upon it the most care. Herein I would have you learn of the farmer. Keep things distinct in your minds—not mixed and muddled by careless thoughtlessness. Do not live a huddled life, without care and discretion, running all things into one, but sort them out and divide and distinguish between the precious and the vile. See what this is worth and what the other is worth—and set your matters in rank and order, making some of them principal, and others inferior. I suggest to you young people, especially, that in starting life, you say to yourselves, "What shall we seek?" For he that seeks, finds. "What shall we sow?" "For whatever a man sows that shall he also reap."

The little things of this life are to be attended to—as a man may sow cummin and fitches, there are some inferior things that ought not to be left undone—as a man should sow rye and barley in their appointed place. Still, there is some principal thing—some master thing—some chief thing for which we ought to live—and what shall that be? What ought to be the principal crop that we shall endeavor to cultivate in our hearts and lives? Have you turned that over? Have you really put the problem before you? Or have you gone at it hit or miss, as if it did not matter? Remember, the eye is a most important part of the body. How shall a man direct his steps if he cannot see? And the *motive* is the eye. What have you an eye to? What are you living for? What is the principal aim with you? Is it going to be that of the old gentleman satirized in Horace who said to his son—"Get money: get it honestly, if you can; but, by all means, get money"? Is money-getting to be the principal wheat with you? Or will you choose a life of pleasure—"a short life and a merry one"—as so many fools have said, to their great sorrow? Is it in dissipation that your life is to be spent? Are thistles to be your principal crop? Because there is a pleasure in looking at a Scot thistle, do you intend to grow acres of pleasurable vices? And will you make your bed upon them when you come to die? Oh, look and see what is worthy of being the principal objective in life! And, when you have found that out, then pray God, of His Holy Spirit, to help you to choose that one thing and to give all your powers and faculties to the cultivation of it!

The farmer, who finds that wheat ought to be his principal crop, makes it so, and lays himself out with that end in view. He looks around and says, "What is the best thing for me to produce?" And when he has found it out, he calls it his principal thing. Dear friends, do, I pray you, remember that true *godliness* is the principal thing! Therefore get it and prize it above all things! Now, mark that this farmer was wise because he counted that to be principal which was most necessary. His family could do without cummin, which was but a flavoring. Even the fitches are thought to have been a plant which yielded a grain used in giving a taste to bread, but they were not a valuable crop. The family could do without cummin and fitches. Perhaps the mistress might complain, or the cook might grumble, but that did not matter as much as it would if the children cried for bread! They certainly could not do without wheat, for bread is the staff of life. It is bread that strengthens man's heart, and therefore, the Eastern farmer must grow bread if he does not grow anything else. That which is most necessary he makes to be the principal thing. Is not this commonsense? If we were wisely to sit down and estimate, should we not say, "To be forgiven my sin; to be right with God; to be holy; to be fit to live eternally in heaven is the greatest, the most necessary thing for me, and therefore I will make it the principal objective of my pursuit"? To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever is the most necessary thing for a creature—for a creature cannot be satisfied unless he is answering the end for which he was created!

And it is the end of every intelligent creature, first, that he may *glorify* God, and next, that he may *enjoy* God. What a bliss it must be to enjoy God, Himself, forever and ever! Other things may be desirable, but this thing is necessary. A certain competence, a measure of esteem among men, a degree of health—all these are the flavoring of life—but to be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation—this is life itself! This is the bread by which our soul's best life is to be sustained! Oh, that we were all wise enough to feel that to be one with Christ is the one thing necessary—that to be at peace with God is the principal thing—that to be brought into harmony with the Most High is the true music of life! The

moralities and courtesies of life, like the minor seeds, may take their place in due order upon our farm, but the fear of the Lord is the principal wheat and we must cultivate it with our whole heart!

This farmer was wise because he made that to be the principal thing which was the most fit to be so. Of course, barley is very useful as food. Nations have lived on barley bread and lived healthily, too. And rye has been the nutriment of whole nations—neither have men starved when restricted to oats and other grains. Still, for all in all, give me good wheat flour! I know our Scot friends like oat-cake, better, but I hardly think that we shall all come to their mind while wheat flour is at a reasonable price! We still like a piece of wheat bread and look upon it as being the best staff of life. The oat is rather a knotty staff, but wheat is a fair good walking cane with which a man may go through life right merrily. Only give men enough bread and why should they complain? Though I suppose they would, for even when the Israelites had manna in the wilderness, they complained and that was angels' food—they called it light bread. Brothers and sisters, the Eastern farmer knew that wheat was the most fitting food for man and so he did not put the inferior grain, which might act as a substitute, into the prominent place. He planted the most fitting thing, namely, the wheat, in the most prominent position. He did not speak of "the principal barley," or "the principal rye," much less "the principal cummin," or "the principal fitches," but "the principal wheat." And what is there, brethren, that is as fit for the heart, the mind, the soul of man as to know God and His Christ? Other mental foods, such as the fruits of knowledge and the dainties of science, excellent though they may be, are inferior nutriment and unsuitable to build up the entire structure of our manhood! If I can get my God, my Savior, I find my heaven and my all. My soul sits down to a crumb of truth concerning the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—and finds the greatest satisfaction in living upon it! The more we can know God, enjoy God and become like God—and the more Christ is our daily bread—the more do we perceive the fitness of all this to the new-born soul. O beloved, make that your principal thing which is the fittest theme for an immortal mind—

***"Religion is the chief concern
Of mortals here below.
May I, its great importance learn,
Its sovereign virtue know!
More needful this than glittering wealth,
Or anything the world bestows.
Not reputation, food, or health,
Can give us such repose."***

Moreover, this farmer was wise because he made the principal thing that which was the most profitable. Under certain circumstances, in our own country, wheat is not the most profitable thing which a man can grow. But, ordinarily, wheat is the best crop that the earth yields for general consumption and, therefore, the text speaks of "the principal wheat." Our grandfathers used to rely upon the wheat stack to pay the rent. They looked to their corn as the arm of their strength, and though it is not so now, yet it was always so of old, and perhaps it may yet be so again. Anyway, the figure is just as good with regard to true religion—to fear the Lord is the most profitable thing. I am told that rich men at the present time find it hard to get hold of anything which yields five per cent. Oh, but this blessed fear of the Lord is an extraordinarily profitable kind of business, for it brings in far more than a hundred per cent or a thousand per cent! In this business, a man begins without any capital! In fact, he begins head over ears in debt and yet he makes a fortune such as misers never dream of! You will say it is a strange way of starting in business—but the believing sinner does so. When he comes to God, he is penniless and as much in debt as he can be. The Lord discharges his heavy arrears of sin and then the believer rises in riches by sinking more deeply into debt of another kind—not of sin, but of gratitude! He owes his great Lord more and more, till he is quite unable even, to *imagine* the depth of his obligation! Neither does this grieve him—he comes to love the poverty which enables him to avail himself of the heavenly treasury. He even aspires to be more and more deeply in debt to the sovereign grace of God! His ambition is to increase his obligations which even now overwhelm him. He grows richer as he feels himself poorer and he is stronger as he knows more of his personal infirmity.

It is a wonderful business, this, in which bankrupts make fortunes, in which beggars rise to sit among princes!—

*“Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large;
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge.
But let our debts be what they may,
However great or small,
As soon as we have naught to pay,
Our Lord forgives us all.”*

Being freely discharged of our sins, we are, by overflowing grace, greatly enriched, so that we number among our possessions heaven itself, Christ Himself, God Himself! All things are ours! Oh, what a blessed trade it is to enter upon! There never was such a transaction as this, for when an *empty* sinner trades with a *full* Savior, he is, himself, filled with all the fullness of God! Assuredly this soul-enriching communion with Christ ought to be first upon our thoughts! Then let godliness be the principal wheat, for there is nothing so profitable! Godliness is profitable for the life that now is and for that which is to come. Godliness is a blessing to a man's body—it keeps him from drunkenness and vice. It is a blessing to his soul—it makes it sweet and pure. It is a blessing to him in every way. If I had to die like a dog, I would like to *live* like a Christian. If there were no hereafter, yet still, for comfort and for joy, give me the life of one that lives like Christ, or strives to do so! There is a practical everyday truth in the verse—

*“Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live.
‘Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die.”*

Only that religion must not be of the common sort—it must not be a vain profession—it must have for its root a hearty faith in Jesus Christ. See you to it. Religion must be either everything or nothing, either first or nowhere. Make it the principal thing and it will fill your soul with treasure. Thus, you see, the farmer was right in having a principal crop and in selecting the right seed to be his principal care.

I do not suppose that he ever entered into any dispute upon the matter. He felt sure that wheat must be his principal produce and he gave his thoughts to it. I cannot bear to hear people disputing as to whether it is worth while to give their heart to Christ. The people who question the value of faith have never tried it. Whenever you observe some conceited creature writing an essay against true religion and putting it into one of our precious “reviews,” do not be carried away by hearing people say that it is mightily clever. If you read it, say to yourselves, “Certainly, this is a clever thing, for here is a blind man writing upon the harmony of colors! Look what learned observations he makes upon scarlet and blue, which, *he* says, are precisely the *same* and only some narrow-minded folks insist upon their being different.” You may regard the wise remarks of an unregenerate philosopher as a very fine essay by a deaf man upon music. Can a horse write about angels? He does not know anything about the subject, nor does the unrenewed man understand the regenerate man! He has not the powers and faculties that would enable him to know, for the carnal man knows not the things that are of God—they are spiritually discerned and as he has not the Spirit, he cannot discern them. Until he is born-again, he has no spiritual knowledge or judgment. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” “You must be born-again.” We are willing to take the evidence of scientific men upon the science that they have mastered, but we care nothing for their opinion upon a matter which is quite out of their range.

Who shall tell me that there is no sweetness in honey? I do not accept the verdict of one who asserts it to be as tasteless as the white of an egg, but I wonder at the palate which can so deceive a man! Has a man lost the power of taste? What is his judgment worth? I put a piece of honeycomb into my mouth and my experience of sweetness is a complete deliverance from all infidelity in that direction. When a man tells me that there is no sweetness in godliness, I smile for myself and drop a tear for him—and tasting yet, more and more, the deliciousness of godliness—I smile *again* to think that he should talk so

fast about a thing of which he knows nothing! Oh, yes, we have made up our minds long ago—we are not going to argue about it any more—godliness is the principal wheat to us! We know it by experience. We have tasted and handled the good word of life. As the Eastern farmer was quite sure that the wheat was the principal thing, so are we quite sure of it, and from now on, God helping us, we shall sow the principal wheat and leave others to sow tares or darnel if they will! Thus have I said enough upon our first observation—the farmer is a lesson to us because he knows what is the principal thing!

II. Secondly, he is a lesson to us because HE GIVES THIS PRINCIPAL THING THE PRINCIPAL PLACE. I find that the Hebrew is rendered by some eminent scholars, “He puts the wheat into the principal place.” That little handful of cummin, for the wife to flavor the cakes with, he grows in a corner, and the various herbs he plants in their proper borders. The barley he puts in its place and the rye in its acre. But if there is a good bit of rich soil—the best he has—he says to his men, “That is for the wheat.” The principal place is for the principal crop. He gives his choicest fields to that which is to be the main means of his living. Now here is a lesson for you and for me. Let us give to true godliness our principal powers and abilities. Let us give to the things of God our best, our ripest, our most careful, and our most intense thought. I pray you, do not take religion at second hand from what I tell you, or somebody else tells you, but think it over and give it your principal thoughts. Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the Word of God! The thoughtful Christian is the growing Christian. Remember, the service of God deserves our very best consideration and endeavor. We are poor things at our best, but we ought to give the Lord nothing short of our principal powers. God would not have us serve Him heedlessly, but He would have us use all the brain and intellect and mind that we have in studying and practicing the things of God.

“Acquaint, now, yourself with God, and be at peace.” “Meditate upon these things. Give yourself wholly to them.” If ever your mind is more clear and active at one time than at another, then sow the principal wheat of godly contemplation and gracious devotion. If you feel fresher and more inclined to think at one time of the day than at another, let your whole mind at once go forth towards the best things. Be sure, also, to yield to this subject your most earnest love. The best field in the little estate of manhood is not so much the intellect as the *affections*; sow the principal wheat there. Oh, to have true religion in the heart! To love what we know—intensely to love it! To hold it fast as with the grip of life and death—never to let it go! The Lord says, “My son, give Me your heart,” and He will not be content with anything less than your heart! When your zeal is most burning and your love is most fervent, let the warmth and the fervency all go towards the Lord your God, and to the service of Him who has redeemed you with His precious blood! Let the principal wheat have the principal part of your nature. Towards God and His Christ, also turn your strongest, heartiest, and most fervent *desires*. When you enlarge your desire, desire Christ! When you become ambitious, let your ambition be all for God! Let your hunger and your thirst be after righteousness! Let your aspirations and your longings be all towards holiness and the things that shall make you like Christ! Give to this principal wheat your principal desires.

Then let the Lord also have, always, the attentive respect of your life. Let the principal wheat be sown in every action of life. I think if we are truly Christians, we must, of necessity, be as much Christians outside the church as in it. We shall try to make our eating and our drinking, and everything we do, tend to the glory of God. Draw no line between the secular and the religious part of your conduct, but let the secular be made religious by a devout desire to glorify God in the one as much as in the other! Let us worship God in the most common duties of life, even as they do who stand before His throne and serve Him day and night. Pray daily, “Your will be done in earth as it is done in heaven.” Let us sow the principal wheat in all the fields of our life. May we each one feel, “For me to live is Christ.” I cannot live without Christ; I would not live forgetting Christ, and I could not live for anything but Christ. Let your whole nature yield to Jesus and to none else.

We should give to this principal wheat our most earnest labors. I mean for the spread of the gospel. A man ought to consecrate himself to the utmost in the matter of holy work for Jesus. I dread to see a professing man zealous in politics, and lukewarm in devotion—all on fire in the parish vestry—but chill as winter when he comes to a prayer meeting! Some fly like eagles when they are serving the *world*, but

they have a broken wing when they come into the worship of God! This should not be! If anything could awaken us up and make the lion within us roar in his strength, it should be when we confront the foes of Jesus, or fight for His cause! Our Lord's service is the principal wheat—let us labor most in connection with it. Lay all your talents under tribute to King Jesus. No, lay out your whole body, soul and spirit for God who is your all in all. Spend and be spent, that this highest, noblest objective of your life may be achieved—if you spend all and win Christ you will be a glorious gainer! This should also take possession of us so as to lead us to our greatest sacrifices. The love of Christ ought to be so strong as to swallow up self and make sacrifice our daily joy. For Christ's name's sake we should be willing to endure poverty, reproach, slander, exile, death—and count them all joy! Nothing should be precious to a Christian in comparison with Christ, who is preciousness to them that believe. I will put it to you whether it is so with you or not. Is the love of Jesus the principal wheat with you? Are you giving your religion the chief place or not? I am afraid that some people treat religion as certain gentlemen treat a part of their estate. They have a farm away from their dwelling which they call an off-hand farm—they put a bailiff into it and only give an eye to it now and then. Some people hold their religion as an off-hand farm—their *minister* is the bailiff—who has to see to it for them.

I am sure such spiritual farming never pays. They have religion? Certainly! Yes. Oh, certainly—yes. But I am afraid they are like the man of whom the child spoke at the Sunday school. "Is your father a Christian?" asked the teacher. "Yes," said the child, "but he has not worked much at it lately." I could point out several of this sort who are sowing their wheat very sparingly and choosing the most barren patch to sow it in! They profess to be Christians, but religion is a tenth-rate article on their farm. Some have a large acreage for the world and a poor little plot for Christ. They are great growers of worldly pleasure and self-indulgence—and they sow a little religion by the roadside for appearance sake. They spend more time at billiards than at prayers! This will not do! God will not thus be mocked! If we despise Him and His truth, we shall be lightly esteemed. O come, let us give our principal time, talent, thought, effort to that which is the chief concern of immortal spirits! May God help us to do so! May we imitate the farmer who gives the principal wheat the principal place on his farm.

III. Let us learn a third lesson. THE FARMER SELECTS THE PRINCIPAL WHEAT OR THE BEST SEED WHEN HE IS SOWING HIS FIELDS. That is another meaning of the text, namely, when a farmer is setting aside wheat for sowing, he does not choose the tail corn, and all the worst of his produce. If he is a sensible man, he likes to sow the best grains that he can get. Many farmers search the country round for a good sample of wheat for sowing, for they do not expect to get a good harvest out of a bad sowing. The farmer is taught of God to put into the ground the principal wheat—the selected kernels. If I am going to sow to the Lord and to be a Christian, I should sow the purest form of our holy religion. And I should try to do this, first, by believing the weightiest doctrines. I would like to believe, not this "ism," nor that, but the unadulterated truth of God which Jesus taught! If I want to produce in my soul a holy character, it will come by the Spirit of God out of true doctrine. Falsehood always breeds sin—the truth of God begets and fosters holiness. You and I, therefore, ought to pick over all our seed carefully, judge and decide between the truth of God and error, and not let our soul receive anything but what is according to the Word of God. We ought to choose the most important truths, for I have known people attach the chief importance to the smallest things—and this is an error in judgment.

I know a denomination which has differences among itself such as no ordinary person could understand, but the members make no end of warfare over them! They even exclude one another for not being exclusive enough—and if by vehement effort they all reach one point of exclusiveness—they spy out another hopeful reason for quarreling and commence to exclude again! Some microscopic point of doctrine or ritual suffices for the creation of party upon party! They are like mercury—pour it on a table and watch how it divides into tiny globules! It splits and splits again. They, no doubt, are persons of great precision and discernment, but it were well if their tithing of mint and anise led them to attend to the weightier matters of brotherly love and Christian unity! They fight over the fitches and leave the wheat to the crows. I do not agree with them at all; those who will may dispute over vials and trumpets—I

shall mainly preach the doctrine of the precious blood, and the glorious truths of God of substitution and atonement! These doctrines are the principal wheat, and therefore, these shall fall into our furrows!

Next to that, we ought to sow the noblest examples. Many men are dwarfed because they choose a bad model to start with. They imitate dear old Mr. So-and-So till they grow wonderfully like he is; only the best of him is left out! One minister happens to be of a gloomy turn of mind, and he preaches the deep experience of the children of God—and in consequence a band of good people think it to be their duty to be melancholy. How unwise! We should never copy any! To be like Peter, we need not be rash! If you copy any good man, there is a point at which you ought to stop short. Yet, if I must have a human model, I would like to have one of the bravest of the saints of God. But, oh, how much better to imitate that perfect pattern which you have in Christ Jesus! Thus when you are sowing the wheat of holy living, sow the best seed you can by having Christ Jesus, Himself, as the example by which you shape your life. We shall sow the best wheat by seeing that we have the purest spirit. But, alas, how soon do spirits become soiled by self, or pride, or despondency, or sloth, or some other earthly taint! But what a grand thing it is to try and live to God in the spirit of Christ Jesus. May we be humble, lowly, bold, self-sacrificing, pure, chaste, and holy—this can only be produced by the Holy Spirit.

And then there is one more mode of sowing selected seed. We should endeavor to live in the closest communion with God. One dear brother prayed in our little meeting before the present service that we might have as much grace as we were capable of receiving, and that God would work in us all that He willed to work in us, and bring us into such a state that we might not hinder Him in any good thing which He willed to do by us. This is to be our desire—we should rise to the highest form of spiritual life! If you sow the principal wheat, get the best sort of wheat. There is religion and there is religion. There is a spirit and a spirit—and there is a system of divinity and another system of divinity. The best is always good enough for me! I exhort you not to rest content with anything short of the best that can be had. O young men, if you mean to follow Christianity, go in for it thoroughly! If you mean to serve the devil, serve him. He is a pretty master! Remember his wages! But if you wish to serve Christ, do not go sneaking through the world as if you were ashamed of your Lord! If you are Christ's, show yourself! If you are worthy of so great a captain, put on your uniform! Rally to His banner; gather to His trumpet call, and then stand up, stand up for Jesus! If there is any manhood in you, this great cause calls for it all! Exhibit it and may the Spirit of God help you to do so!

IV. Fourthly, THE FARMER ATTENDS TO THE PRINCIPAL CROP WITH THE PRINCIPAL CARE. This Hebrew language always astonishes me, for it conveys such a mint of meaning! Sometimes when I study a verse, I find that the critics say that it means this, that and the other, until I have thought, "This language is miraculous, so full, and so deep: very different from our poor English tongue." It teaches us many truths of God in a few words, and like a diamond, it has a hundred facets, each flashing forth a distinct ray of light. This plenitude of meaning leads us to reflect upon a far more weighty matter. It is wonderful how much God can put into a word. Why, He put Himself into one! The name of our divine Lord is, "The Word of God."

Some critics insist that the proper translation of our text is that the farmer plants his wheat in rows. I do not know whether our farmers often plant wheat. They sow the seed in due order, but I do not hear much of *planting* it. It is said that the large crops in Palestine in old time were due to the fact that they *planted* the wheat, absolutely putting it in, root by root, so that there might be no more wheat in a row than there ought to be. And they set it in lines so that it was not checked or suffocated by its being too thick in one place and neither was there any fear of its being too thin in another. The wheat was planted, and then streams of water were turned by the foot to each particular plant of wheat. No wonder, therefore, that the land brought forth abundantly! We give our principal care to the principal thing. Our godliness should be carried out with earnest thought—our service for God should be performed with great care. Brothers and sisters, are we careful enough as to our religious walk? Have you ever searched to the bottom of your profession? Have you ever inquired into the reason of your belonging to your present denomination? Why do you happen to be members of a certain church? Your mother was? Well, there is some good in that reason, but not enough to justify you in the sight of God! Why do you happen to pro-

fess, as you do, such-and-such a form of Christianity? Did you ever look into it? I pray you judge your standing! If any Christian minister is afraid to urge you to this duty, I should stand in doubt of him. I am not at all afraid!

I wish you to examine all that I teach you. I beg you to do it, for I would not like to be responsible for another man's creed. Like the Bereans, search and see whether these things are according to Scripture or not. One of the greatest blessings that can come upon the church would be a searching spirit which would refer everything to the Holy Scriptures. If they speak not according to this Word of God, it is because there is no light of God in them! Therefore try the spirits by this infallible test! In all things render service to God as carefully as the Eastern farmer planted his wheat. You serve a precise God, therefore be precise in His service. He is a jealous God, therefore be jealous of the least taint of error or mistake in anything that you do for Him. Take care, also, that you nourish every part of your religion with prayer, even as the farmer watered each plant. Pray for grace from on high that your soul may never be parched and dried up. Perform to your faith, to your hope, to your love, and to all the graces that are in your soul every necessary service which the farmer renders to his wheat. Watch, weed, guard and water every gracious principle—give your divine graces your principal care, for they are to yield your principal harvest.

V. With one more lesson I close. Do this, because FROM YOUR PRINCIPAL CARE YOU MAY EXPECT YOUR PRINCIPAL CROP. If religion is the principal thing, you may look to religion for your principal reward. The harvest will come to you in various ways. For instance, you will make the greatest success in life if you wholly live to the glory of God. Success or failure must much depend upon the suitableness of the endeavor. I shall never be able to conduct a choir, but I may succeed in preaching, for that is my proper work. Now you, Christian, if you try to live to the *world* you will not succeed, for you are not fitted for it. Grace has spoiled you for sin. If you live to God with all your heart, you will succeed in it, for God has made you for a holy sphere on purpose. As He made the fish for the water and the birds for the air, so He has made the believer for holiness and for the service of God! And you will be out of your element—you will be a fish out of water, or a bird in the stream—if you leave the service of God. The Eastern farmer's prosperity hinges on his wheat and yours upon devotion to God! It is to your faith and love that you must look for your joy. Is there any bliss like the bliss of knowing that you are in Christ and are the beloved of the Lord? It is to your *religion* that you must look for comfort on a sick and dying bed—and you may be there very soon. "Yes, and the sooner the better," you may say, if you have grown this principal wheat, and have sown to the Spirit that you may reap life everlasting!

In the world to come what a crop, what a harvest will come of serving the Lord! What will come out of all else? Nothing but vanity of vanity! A man has made millions and he is dead. What is he the better for his gold? A warrior becomes an emperor—his fame rings throughout all the earth! He dies. What has he of all his honors? What will any of you have at the last if you live to the world? To live to the world is like playing with boys in the street for halfpence, or entertaining yourself as children do with bits of platter and oyster shells. Only a life devoted unto God yields real and substantial results—all else is waste. Let us think so and gird up our loins to serve the Lord! May the divine Spirit help us to sow the principal wheat and live in joyful expectation of reaping a joyous harvest in due season, according to the promise, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." That which was the cause of our principal anxiety, here, shall be the source of our endless happiness hereafter!

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